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ABSTRACT

German primary vocational training is characterized by the Dual System, a system of alternating education with two major partners--business and special vocational education. It coordinates and integrates both theoretical and practical training. Students who complete compulsory education at age 15 may choose this vocational alternating training instead of high school and university. Adult education represents vocational "continuing" education, since its main purpose is to adjust, update, and broaden the individual's already existing qualifications. The various institutions providing adult vocational education in Germany are business and industry, chambers of trade and commerce, trade unions, institutions for further education run by the employers' regional and state associations, private academies and schools, and Volkshochschulen (adult education centers). The Arbeitsfoerderungsgesetz, a law passed in 1969, is intended to provide financial support for courses in vocational training both for participants and institutions, especially for the unemployed. The courses and projects must meet certain conditions and participants must fulfil certain requirements to receive financial support from the state. Participants can demand support for their cost of living and reimbursement for all expenditures connected with the course. Such programs can prove useful for a large percentage of participants and heighten their chances in the job market. Additional qualifications cannot, however, guarantee constant employment. (YLB)

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION IN WEST-GERMANY: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

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in Hollywood, Florida

by Gabriele A. Werner, M.A.
Tuebingen/West-Germany

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Introduction

The rapid advancement and rise of vocational and professional continuing education is a phenomenon that can be observed world-wide. In this field of adult education we have been witnessing the highest growth rates during the past fifteen years, and it has expanded to such an extent that today it emerges as probably the largest sector in adult education. At present an end of this development is clearly not in sight. Both business and government officials do not stop asserting that they consider training and teaching adults for new requirements of the job market an "investment in the future" - much more so than in any other field of further education.

On the other hand, continuing vocational and professional training appears as an area that is much more diverse in terms of its structure, organization and curriculum than the rest of adult education. The confusion becomes even greater if we try to consider the development in world-wide dimension. To me, it seems a great challenge and even necessity for any institution and individual adult educator involved in this sector to define one's position within this diffuse market, to reflect upon the guide-lines and goals one wants to follow, and, even more, to develop concepts that prove not only our flexibility to adapt to changes in business and society, but also our adherence to such essential aims as furthering the development of the individual human being in his totality.

Since it is certainly another characteristic of our profession to look out of our own window and to learn from one another, I would like to introduce you to some aspects of continuing professional

and vocational education in West-Germany. My aim is to contribute to an international understanding of the possibilities and problems we are confronting. As it is not possible to discuss the whole range that is touched by today's topic I have decided to provide a contrastive analysis and limit myself by mainly introducing you to some of those aspects of continuing vocational training in Germany that are different from the system in the United States -- at least as I understand the development here. The aim also is to enter into a discussion with you and initiate an exchange of ideas which might give mutual impulse for our work.

Structure of the Presentation

Since continuing education, its structure and organization to a great extent depends on a country's general school system, I would like to start out with a very brief view on the essential structure of the German system of preparing young people for a profession as compared to the system prevailing here in the United States. These explanations will end up in defining the purpose and the extent of continuing vocational education in Germany. The various institutions providing adult vocational education in Germany will be introduced as well as their respective concepts and the participants.

The central part of this paper, however, will be devoted to programs and projects for the unemployed. Since, unfortunately, the financial framework often presents one of the most problematic obstacles in adult education, I will attempt to make

you familiar with some characteristics of financing vocational training in Germany, in particular for the unemployed. The description of some concrete projects having emerged in recent years will be followed by a discussion of the advantages and limitations of those programs.

The central questions that I would like to concentrate your attention on is: How useful are such programs in view of the present job market and the expected economic development in future years? What are the guidelines adult education should follow in training and re-training adults for their professional lives? To what extent and how can we reconcile the possibly only momentary and short-term demands of business and industry with such goals as contributing to a personal and comprehensive development of the individual?

Unfortunately, I am not in a position to offer ready-made solutions to those questions. I would, however, like to raise an awareness of certain dangers and problems I see.

The German System of Learning for a Profession as Compared to the U.S.-System

There is a great number of determinants influencing the development of a nation's educational system. Let me just remind you of some of the most important ones which I find essential for the different systems in Germany and the United States: the geographical characteristics of a country; a nation's historical and social emergence; philosophical and religious foundations; social values; the forms of government; the economic structure and

system and its political culture.

German primary vocational training is characterized, as you may know, by the so-called "Duale System". This term was coined in the fifties to denote a system of alternating education with two major partners involved, i.e. business on the one hand and special vocational schools on the other hand. The origins of this form of education can be traced back as far as the European medieval system of apprenticeship. Today this kind of training for a professional life is commonly applied in almost all sectors of industry and commerce.

The basic idea behind it is to coordinate and integrate both theoretical and practical training. Within a period of two or three years it prepares for a specific occupation or profession. And its is important to know that this whole process is strictly structured by means of fixed curricula and mandatory certificates in the field of occupations as well as in that of professions. Together with state and business officials the Chambers of Trade and Commerce set up detailed training programs for almost all occupations ranging from the bricklayer to the clerk, the latter being even more precisely differentiated into specific trades, such as bank clerk or clerk in an export company. During those training programs the theoretical and the practical phases run mostly parallel: the students have to attend school session once or twice a week. It becomes clear that within this system of structured and fixed job outlines, vocational education is much more than a mere on-the-job training. Due to the political, social and economic development of Germany, the somewhat dominant role of government regulations is persistent throughout.

Moreover, going through this alternating system is almost mandatory for all young adults leaving secondary school education who are not going on to a university. It might be important to mention in this context that Germany does not know an institution like the American college. Compulsory education generally ends at the age of 15. Students then can choose between moving on to high school and university or exactly to enter this vocational alternating training. This points to one of the essential differences between the US and the German system: As a result of the generally longer time spent at school in the United States, vocational training in this country is shifted much more to the field of adult education. In Germany, adult education is mostly confined to the task of re-training people who have already had a basic vocational training. It represents "continuing" education in the true sense of the word, since its main purpose is to adjust, update and broaden the individually already existing qualifications. The awareness of this separation of qualifying for an occupation on the one hand and adding more and new qualifications within adult education is a decisive prerequisite for understanding the recent devlopments I am going to point out in the following.

What Is Continuing Vocational Education? - The Term, its Range and the Providing Institutions

-- Definition --

Evidently, all subjects of continuing education, whether organized or self-directed, whether in the field of languages, psychology, or even physical recreation, promote individual development and possibly and ideally contribute to professional advancement. Obviously, in this context, however, I would like to use the term merely with reference to programs immediately and directly concerned with delivering vocational skills. Against this background, continuing vocational education can be defined as any kind of organized and institutionalized learning process that is based on qualifications acquired earlier in a primary vocational education. It serves the purpose of preserving, broadening and updating vocational knowledge and skills and of further professional advancement. As has been stated by the German Department of Education and Science, it has to adjust itself to a great extent to the requirements of the occupational system and contribute to the mobility of the working population - a mobility which - by the way - is by far less common in Germany and Europe in general than in the United States.

-- Figures --

Accepting this definition, the number of participants in continuing vocational training in Germany amounts to more than 4 million which equals about 12 % of the working population. Compared to the figures of 1979, the sectors of re-training courses and courses for immediate vocational advancement (finishing with

exams as master or foreman) have remained stable, whereas the so-called adjustment programs updating skills could record a continuous growth rate.

-- Subjects --

The reason for this development which started in the sixties can clearly be found in:

1. recurring phases of economic recession in most western countries,
2. the rapid advancement of new technologies,
3. the increasing international competition in business and industry.

No doubt, one of the subjects that has become central in all courses and programs of continuing vocational and professional education is the field of computer science in its manifold variations. The German Association for Computer Science, for example, estimated already several years ago that in 1990 almost three quarters of all employees will need a more or less intensive training in computer science. Although only 5 % will want special sound skills such as developing new programs, half of all people employed will have to know how to practically handle a number of applied computer programs and how to use informational technology.

-- Institutions --

Unlike in the field of general adult education -- at least in Germany -- the newly discovered market of continuing vocational training has become an area in which a large number of quite different institutions feel called upon. The most important among

those are: business and industry; the chambers of trade and commerce, trade unions; institutions for further education run by the employers' regional and state associations; private academies and schools; and finally the Volkshochschulen, adult education centers that are subsidied mostly by cities or regional administrations and whose programs comprise the whole range of adult education. Especially the latter can claim a vast expansion in the field of continuing vocational training. As early as 1976, for example, 20 % of the total program of the Volkshochschulen, which covers almost anything from liberal arts to physical education, consisted in courses and seminars of vocational training. In this context they assume a rather important role since their whole program as a principle is open for everybody whereas the majority of the other mentioned institutions (business, trade unions etc.) restrict participation to their members. Also, they are among those institutions that are especially active with regard to programs for the unemployed.

Continuing Vocational Education for the Unemployed

One of the landmarks for the expansion of continuing vocational education in Germany was the so-called "Arbeitsfoerderungsgesetz" (in the following referred to by the abbreviation AFG) which was passed in 1969. This law was meant to promote the individual's qualifications and skills to take up work and/or to advance professionally. Its most important and clearly pronounced aims are:

- to reduce unemployment and protect workers from under-qualified employment;
- to ensure and improve individual flexibility and mobility;
- to reduce or even abolish displacements due to technological change;
- to support rehabilitation of physically, mentally and psychologically handicapped;
- to help special target groups re-enter the job market (e.g. women or older people);
- to alleviate sectoral and regional differences of the job market.

These goals are to be achieved through financial support for participants and institutions of courses in vocational training. The financial resources themselves come from the the so-called National Employment Office that administers all employees'and workers' mandatory contributions to the unemployment insurance. In 1982, about 10 % or all people attending measures of continuing vocational education enjoyed financial benefits from this law. And in spite of financial restrictions which came into effect with the law's revision in 1982 the numbers are still rising. Although there are programs like the JTPA in the US, I would still claim that such measures broadly subsidied by the government are not so common here. Thus, it seems appropriate to explain this system, in particular the types of courses, the institutions supported and the groups of prospective participants.

First, there are certain conditions the courses and projects themselves have to meet. Those affect, for example:

- the duration of the course, which has to be longer than two weeks and comprise more than 50 lessons;
- the curriculum and teaching methods, both of which have to be adjusted to adults' demands;
- the teachers who have to prove experience in their respective subject and in adult education;
- financial considerations: measures have to be planned and organized in accordance with the principles of economy and efficiency;
- organizational aspects: the responsible institutions have to supply course outline, curriculum and calculation within a prescribed period before the beginning of a course.

Secondly, the participants have to fulfill certain requirements in order to receive financial support from the state. The most essential demands are:

- that they have payed contributions to the unemployment insurance for a minimum number of years, which means that they need to have been employed;
- that they have had a primary vocational education of some sort;
- that they are likely to finish the course successfully and will presumably find a job afterwards;
- that they are willing to take up an employment which again involves mandatory payments to the unemployment insurance.

If the mentioned conditions are met, the participants can assert a claim in two ways: In case of a full-time measure with all-day lessons they can demand support for their cost lf living. Secondly, they will be reimbursed for all expenditures connected with the course, such as tuition costs, books, travel expenses,

health insurance, costs for baby-sitters etc.

Originally the AFG was not meant to intitiate programs for the unemployed only. However, due to the economic development and the rise of the unemployment figures -- which are around 2 million in Germany at present -- it is the group of the unemployed that today mostly benefit from such programs. In 1983, they constituted 64 % of the participants. This indicates a shift from the former idea of education for advancement, i.e. for those who have a job, to an education for re-training people whose education does not comply with the demands of industry any more. The important role of such projects becomes evident when one considers the money the German government is willing to invest: In 1986, 5.1 billion DM will be spent on vocational training in accordance with AFG regulations. In 1987, this figure will rise up to 5.5 billion DM.

Training Programs for the Unemployed: Some Examples

--Courses for Commercial Training with Applied Computer Pracice--

One of the most popular types of courses run by adult education institutions under the AFG provides knowledge in the field of office and commercial occupation with a special concentration on the use of applied computer programs. The length of such programs varies between six to nine months of full-time training and they comprise anything between 700 and 1200 hours of teaching. They cover a great variety of subjects such as:

- introduction in to computer science, including basic skills in programming;
- accounting and bookkeeping;
- business mathematics;
- political economy;
- business management;
- industrial law and social security regulations;
- practical microcomputer training in bookkeeping and wages accounting, word processing and several other applied computer programs, such as calculation etc.

Ideally, those programs take place in so-called practice companies which are model imitations of the commercial administration of a real company. Here all kinds of work that come up in an actual firm are simulated, the effect being that the students not only learn the skills for a specific department but also experience the co-operation and the interaction relevant for the function of a company as a whole. Similar institution exist in the field of manual work in form of practice workshops where participants qualify for industrial and technical jobs.

-- Integration Programs for Re-Entry Women --

Special attention is recently being paid to those women who, after the so-called "family phase", intend to take up an employment again. The importance of these projects lies in their attempt to combine the mere factual knowledge with a strong support for the women in personal and psychological matters.
The outline for this six-to-nine-months model project describes three fields of learning:

- introduction in to new technologies with respect to office work;
- general and personal education;
- brushing up and updating skills and qualification from the participants' primary vocational education and experience.

As far as possible those three fields should be integrated.

The idea behind it is that most women who have spent ten or fifteen years in the role of mothers and housewives almost inevitably find themselves in a phase of drastic re-orientation when they want to take up an employment again. Very often they lack the personal support of their partners, they are confronted for the first time with a two-fold burden inside and outside their homes. Due to the social isolation which they have experienced in past years they tend to interprete their problems as merely personal and individual and consider themselves failures. The frequently observable loss of self-esteem can result in a very profound identity-crisis.

With these learning obstacles in mind, syllabus of merely factual knowledge would in many cases be doomed to failure from the beginning. Thus, the central idea of those programs consists in the integration of that field which is only roughly indicated by "personal and general education". Integration in this sense means that a form of psychological support actually has to become part of the teaching of subjects and not only run parallel to it. Counseling and subject delivery should be combined, which means that the teachers of the different subjects assume the important part. They are called upon to build up an atmosphere of trust and confidence between themselves and the participants because they are the ones who spend most time in the classroom -- unlike

psychologists who might accompany such a project but who, in most cases, stay outside the classroom.

Reasonable as this concept undoubtedly sounds, it involves great difficulties with respect to its realization. It calls for teachers who are on the one hand specialists in their subject and who, at the same time, have a very profound qualification in counseling with regard to psychological and personal problems. Teachers called for in this model have to undergo a thorough training themselves first.

Social Implications and Consequences for Adult Education

Is is beyond any doubt that such programs, in particular when they are practically oriented, can prove useful for a great percentage of participants. And it is also unquestionably true that more qualifications heighten one's chances on the job market. However, this statement cannot be turned round in the sense that additional qualifications guarantee constant employment. We have to witness today that even the extremely highly qualified lose their jobs and have to stay without work for a considerable time of their lives. Clearly, the reasons for such a development are to a great extent structural problems of the economy: e.g. recurring crises of the world economy, an increasingly saturated market for consumer goods, a declining tendency for innovation and investment, and, last but not least, efficiency measures of business and industry. An improvement of this situation does not seem to be in sight, in particular when one also takes into account the rising numbers of women and -- in Germany -- foreign

workers looking for employment. In addition there is always a considerable percentage of hidden unemployment of all those who do not register officially. According to German estimations the relation of this so-called "quiet reserve" to the officially unemployed is one third to two thirds! Many economic predictions more or less agree that we will have to cope with about the same number of unemployed people in the year 2000 as today. This means that unemployment has become almost a common experience nowadays. We are all aware of the effects and psychological consequences that an experience of prolonged unemployment can have, such as loss of self-esteem, a sense of isolation, loss of the capacity for achievement, loss of perspective in life. Moreover, those indicators of crisis do not affect only the unemployed persons themselves but also their families.

In this situation, educational projects can certainly help stabilizing the individual, assist him or her in finding a time-structure in everyday life, and in getting in contact with other people.

We have to realize, however, that for many of those adults such programs present a merely temporary relief because they still will not find a terminal employment afterwards.

We also have to accept the fact that continuing professional and vocational education does not create new jobs -- except for the teachers/traininers and the program coordinators maybe. It can only contribute to a re-organization of the employment structure: We all know, for example, that in certain fields, such as the service sector, the number of jobs will increase, whereas in other areas, such as the manufacturing industry, the amount of

jobs is due to decrease.

From this context, I take it as a task and a challenge for adult education to define its position and state clearly what our goals are. At present, we seem to be in danger of resigning ourselves to a rather passive role of merely reponding to and performing the momentary and possibly even short-term demands of the economy. Let me even say it a bit more drastically by calling it a game we are playing when we try to solve social and ecnomomic problems on an individual basis by telling the unemployed it is their fault if they do not get an occupation.

To eliminate doubts I should stress that, of course, I am not againt continuing professional and vocational training. My point is that we should not lose the perception of the general context we are working in. We should aim to get away from a purely performance-oriented approach and try to include aspects which further our clients' general development and enhance their emancipation. Since the latter was and still is the point of departure for adult education in general, this "philosophy" of our profession may have to be redefined in a changing society, but we have to be careful not to lose it altogether.